

**VOLUSIA SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**REPORT OF INVESTIGATION**

**REPORT NUMBER: IA 20-005**

**PERIOD COVERED:** April 26, 2020  
**DATE REPORTED:** April 29, 2020  
**SUBJECT(S) NAME:** Deputy Joel Medina #8601  
**INVESTIGATING OFFICERS:** Detective Heather Welch #6871

**BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:**

On April 26, 2020, Joseph Sucharski (Mr. Sucharski) was in custody after an arrest for an act of theft and violation of pre-trial conditions (see VCSO report #20-8026). Mr. Sucharski was handcuffed behind his back in the back seat of Deputy Medina's patrol car, where he allegedly became combative and had to be further restrained. Deputy Medina enlisted the help of Deputy Joshua Hansard to assist with further restraining Mr. Sucharski with a hobble. While hobbled in the back seat of Deputy Medina's Patrol car, Mr. Sucharski began yelling and throwing himself into the vehicle's cage partition, as well as kicking the rear driver side door, to the extent the door was bowing outward with each kick. Deputy Medina and Deputy Hansard further restrained Mr. Sucharski, using a seat belt restraint, to prevent him from further harming himself or county property. While Deputy Medina was in the back seat attempting to restrain Mr. Sucharski with the seat belt restraint, Mr. Sucharski struck the left side of Deputy Medina's face with his head (head butt). After Deputy Medina was head butted, he allegedly struck Mr. Sucharski one time in the face with a closed fist.

**OFFENSES:**

This investigation is relevant to an alleged violation of Department Standards Directives and Volusia County Merit Rules and Regulations:

***Volusia County Merit System Rules and Regulations – Division 13 Disciplinary Actions 86-453  
Reasons for disciplinary action (14) and (22):***

*Any of the following violations may be sufficient grounds for disciplinary action ranging from oral reprimand to dismissal, depending on the seriousness of the offense and other circumstances related to the situation.*

*(14) Any conduct, on or off duty, that reflects unfavorably on the County as an Employer.*

*(22) Any other conduct or action of such seriousness that discipline action is considered warranted.*

***Volusia Sheriff's Office Standards and Directives:***

**26.2.132 Job Knowledge and Performance-** Failure to maintain required skills, knowledge and abilities within acceptable levels shall result in counseling, instruction or training. *(Violation subject up to a written reprimand.)*

On May 12, 2020, Chief Joseph Gallagher assigned the above incident to the Internal Affairs Unit. Detective Welch reviewed the Supervisor Inquiry authored by Sergeant Michael Campanella, Sheriff's Office reports, along with Body Worn Camera (BWC) video of the deputies involved. *(See Tab – C for Supervisor Inquiry)*

Detective Welch reviewed the BWC of Deputy Hansard and Deputy Medina, which captured the event. After arresting Mr. Sucharski and placing him in handcuffs behind his back, Mr. Sucharski began refusing to cooperate with deputies while they were trying to get him in the backseat of Deputy Medina's patrol car. Mr. Sucharski tensed his body and laid flat, forcing the deputies to push and pull him into the backseat. Deputy Medina closed the door and walked across the street. Deputies heard banging coming from the patrol car and observed Mr. Sucharski kicking the rear driver side door with enough intensity the door was bowing outward, forming a clear gap at the top with each kick. Deputy Medina and Deputy Hansard applied a hobble to further restrain Mr. Sucharski and closed the door. Mr. Sucharski continued kicking the rear driver side door and was yelling and screaming. Mr. Sucharski was banging his body on the interior of the patrol car. Deputy Hansard went to the rear passenger side door of the vehicle and Deputy Medina went to the rear driver side door of the vehicle. Deputy Medina struggled to apply the seat belt restraint to

Mr. Sucharski to prevent him from harming himself or the vehicle. Deputy Medina was in the backseat with Mr. Sucharski, while Deputy Hansard assisted on the passenger side by physically restraining Mr. Sucharski to keep him from thrashing about. Once Mr. Sucharski was secured in the restraint, Deputy Hansard closed the rear passenger door. Deputy Medina continued to try to tighten the restraint and was in extremely close proximity of Mr. Sucharski. Mr. Sucharski delivered a quick head butt to Deputy Medina's face and Deputy Medina immediately reacted and struck him one time in the face with a closed fist and backed out of the vehicle. *(See Tab – I for Digital Media)*

On May 20, 2020, Deputy Medina was served with a Notification of Internal Investigation along with a copy of his Officer Bill of Rights. This report details the internal investigation conducted by Detective Welch. *(See Tab – C for Official Correspondence)*

### **Sergeant Michael Campanella**

On June 1, 2020, Detective Welch and Detective Burke conducted a sworn recorded interview with Sergeant Campanella at the District-4 Office, 1691 Providence Boulevard, Deltona. The following is a summary of that interview:

Sergeant Campanella has been employed with the Volusia Sheriff's Office for approximately 24 years. Sergeant Campanella is currently assigned to District-4 Law Enforcement Operations Division (LEOD) alpha shift. Sergeant Campanella has worked as a sergeant for approximately 10 years.

During the interview with Internal Affairs Detectives, Sergeant Campanella recalled the arrest of Mr. Sucharski for theft and violation of pre-trial conditions, made by Deputy Medina at 1780 Howland Boulevard, Deltona on April 26, 2020. Sergeant Campanella was not on scene during this incident and did not witness it firsthand. Sergeant Campanella responded to the scene after he was notified of the physical altercation between Mr. Sucharski and Deputy Medina. Sergeant Campanella advised upon his arrival on scene, he observed Mr. Sucharski properly restrained in the back seat of Deputy Medina's patrol vehicle. Sergeant Campanella stated from his training and experience he could confirm Mr. Sucharski was under the influence of some type of unknown

narcotic and/or alcohol by observing his behavior. Sergeant Campanella observed a small scrape or scuff with a drop of blood visible to Mr. Sucharski's left cheek. Deltona Fire Rescue was already on scene and Mr. Sucharski refused any medical treatment. Sergeant Campanella attempted to speak with Mr. Sucharski; however, Mr. Sucharski was being uncooperative the entire time. Sergeant Campanella recalled Mr. Sucharski being "*belligerent to the highest degree of someone being belligerent*" and he was unable to have a conversation with him. Mr. Sucharski was screaming and struggling in the back seat while he was on scene.

Sergeant Campanella spoke with Deputy Medina about this incident and observed redness and swelling to the left side of his face, consistent with a head butt injury. Sergeant Campanella advised Deputy Medina's statement of events was consistent with what he observed while later watching Deputy Medina and Deputy Hansard's BWC videos of the incident. Sergeant Campanella recalled watching the videos and stated Deputy Medina was attempting to tighten the chest restraint in order to keep Mr. Sucharski from thrashing about and injuring himself. Deputy Medina was in extremely close proximity to Mr. Sucharski as he attempted to complete the task, when the head-butt occurred. Sergeant Campanella advised it happened so fast that all he heard was what sounded like clapping hands twice. The first "clap" being the head butt, as described by Deputy Medina, and the second "clap" being a reactionary strike from Deputy Medina trying to create distance so he would not get attacked again. *(See Tab-D for Official Transcript)*

### **Deputy Trevor Brown**

On June 1, 2020, Detective Welch and Detective Burke conducted a sworn recorded interview with Deputy Trevor Brown at the District-4 Office, 1691 Providence Boulevard, Deltona. The following is a summary of that interview:

Deputy Brown has been employed with the Volusia Sheriff's Office for approximately two years. Deputy Brown is currently assigned to District-4 Law Enforcement Operations Division (LEOD) alpha shift.

Deputy Brown advised he was working on a case involving Mr. Sucharski at 379 North SR 415, Osteen. Deputy Brown was aware Deputy Medina and Deputy Hansard were also working a crash

at 1780 Howland Boulevard involving Mr. Sucharski. Deputy Brown advised he ultimately found probable cause to arrest Mr. Sucharski in reference to his case and requested Deputy Medina to do so. Deputy Brown advised he later responded to 1780 Howland Boulevard in order to transport Mr. Sucharski to the branch jail, since it was his arrest. Deputy Brown did not end up transporting Mr. Sucharski because his behavior was such that they did not want to attempt to switch him to a second car. Deputy Brown was not on scene during the arrest and did not witness any part of the incident involving Mr. Sucharski and Deputy Medina. Deputy Brown did not make contact with Mr. Sucharski during this incident and could not see him clearly enough in Deputy Medina's back seat to observe any possible injuries. Deputy Brown made contact with Deputy Medina upon arriving on scene. Deputy Brown stated *"He (Deputy Medina) told me that he was leaning over him I believe to seat belt him with the chest seat belt and he said as he was leaning in the defendant reared his head back and head butted him in the left side of the cheek and he (Deputy Medina) instantly just hit him"*. Deputy Brown further stated, *"He, he was he seemed to be upset. I think he knew he was probably gonna be in trouble he because we've seen this before and he was worked up trying to calm down. He kept saying, "I can't believe I just did that". (See Tab-E for Official Transcript)*

### **Deputy Joshua Hansard**

On June 1, 2020, Detective Welch and Detective Burke conducted a sworn recorded interview with Deputy Joshua Hansard at the District-4 Office, 1691 Providence Boulevard, Deltona. The following is a summary of that interview:

Deputy Hansard has been employed with the Volusia Sheriff's Office for approximately seven years. Deputy Hansard is currently assigned to District-4 Law Enforcement Operations Division (LEOD) Deltona Traffic Unit.

Deputy Hansard advised he was dispatched to the intersection of Newmark Drive and Howland Boulevard, Deltona, in reference to a vehicle that crashed into a residence garage door. Mr. Sucharski was the driver of that vehicle when it crashed. Deputy Hansard worked the crash investigation and Deputy Medina arrived on scene as a back-up unit. Deputy Hansard advised after he completed his crash investigation Deputy Brown determined there was probable cause to

arrest Mr. Sucharski in reference to a separate incident at 379 North SR 415, Osteen. Deputy Hansard stated he and Deputy Medina placed Mr. Sucharski in handcuffs behind his back and asked him to get into the back of Deputy Medina's patrol vehicle. Mr. Sucharski began to tense up physically and refused to comply with orders to get into the vehicle. Mr. Sucharski stepped up onto the rear frame of the vehicle, putting himself in a position much higher than the deputies and preventing them from placing him into the vehicle. Deputy Hansard stated,

*"We had to physically bring him back down readjust his body position and finally get him in the vehicle. At that time I think we closed the door and we walked to the other side of the street where the defendant's vehicle was approximately 20 yards and then we both noticed the defendant was kicking the back driver door so far that there was a gap in the top of the door. So to prevent any further damage to the vehicle and to prevent injury to for him we determined that we were going to hobble him. We were eventually able to. He continued to kick and then he started banging his head on the inside of the patrol car. At that time we decided that we were going to put the seat belt restraint on him and then when we were putting the seat belt restraint on him I was on the passenger side of Deputy Medina's car. Medina was on the driver side and he was tensing up, physically resisting not allowing us to safely restrain him to prevent injury and damage to the car. He was finally able to get the seat belt restraint around his chest behind his arms per policy and I closed the door to the passenger side of Medina's car and that's when I heard a loud thud and then I heard another one and then as I came around the other side Medina told me that he just got hit in the head, head butted, and out of reaction he said that he punched the guy. I didn't witness any of that I just heard it. We were finally able to subdue him from any injury to himself or to the patrol car and then we immediately called for a supervisor".*

Deputy Hansard advised while conducting the crash investigation Mr. Sucharski did not seem to be impaired; however, once they got him into custody it did appear he was under the influence of some sort of narcotics. Deputy Hansard stated there were no other deputies present while Mr. Sucharski was being taken into custody. Deputy Hansard advised both he and Deputy Medina were in close proximity of Mr. Sucharski while trying to restrain him and Mr. Sucharski was

shouting vulgar obscenities at them. Deputy Hansard explained Deputy Medina stated he punched Mr. Sucharski out of reaction right after he head butted him in the face. Deputy Hansard stated, *“I believe he said “oh fuck” or something like that. I mean he knew that once he did it that it probably wasn’t the best thing to do, but at the same time you just got head butted in the face and his face was swollen. I mean, it didn’t, there’s no doubt in my mind that this guy head butted him and purely out of reaction and self-defense he punched the guy right in the face”*. Deputy Hansard advised he heard two “thud” sounds, one immediately after the other. *(See Tab-E for Official Transcript)*

### **Deputy Joel Medina**

On June 11, 2020, Detective Welch and Lieutenant Sawicki conducted a sworn recorded interview with Deputy Medina. Also present was Attorney Gary Wilson. The following is a summary of that interview:

Deputy Medina has been employed with the Volusia Sheriff’s Office for approximately four years. Deputy Medina is currently assigned to Support Operations Division (SOD), Judicial Services. On April 26, 2020, Deputy Medina was assigned to District-4 Law Enforcement Operations Division (LEOD).

During the interview with Internal Affairs Detectives, Deputy Medina recalled the arrest of Mr. Sucharski for violation of pre-trial release, theft, and resisting arrest without violence, at 1780 Howland Boulevard in Deltona. Deputy Medina advised he and Deputy Hansard initially responded to the intersection of Newmark Drive and Howland Boulevard in Deltona for a vehicle versus a structure. Upon arrival, it was discovered Mr. Sucharski had crashed his vehicle into the residential garage door of 1780 Howland Boulevard. Deputy Medina stood by for assistance while Deputy Hansard conducted the crash investigation. Mr. Sucharski did not complain of injuries or request medical attention. Deputy Medina did not observe any visible injuries to Mr. Sucharski at that time.

Deputy Brown and Deputy Eisen were investigating a separate incident at 379 North SR 415, Osteen. Deputy Medina explained Deputy Brown notified him that Mr. Sucharski turned out to be the suspect in his investigation involving the theft of a dog and violation of pre-trial conditions. Deputy Medina advised he Mirandized Mr. Sucharski and post Miranda he admitted to being at

the location of Deputy Brown's investigation. Mr. Sucharski was aware of his pre-trial conditions and he admitted to playing with the dog and leaving the scene with the dog in his vehicle. Mr. Sucharski advised the dog was in his vehicle until he crashed into the garage door and the dog fled the scene. Deputy Medina stated he relayed the information from the interview to Deputy Brown, at which point Deputy Brown determined probable cause to place Mr. Sucharski under arrest and requested he take him into custody.

Deputy Medina advised he and Deputy Hansard placed Mr. Sucharski under arrest, handcuffed him behind his back, and escorted him over to his patrol vehicle. Deputy Hansard attempted to search Mr. Sucharski, at which time he began turning his body and asking, "*under arrest for what?*" Deputy Medina stated when he placed Mr. Sucharski under arrest he advised him he was under arrest for theft. Deputy Medina explained Mr. Sucharski was turning his body preventing a proper search, so Deputy Hansard restrained him to where he could properly search him. After the search, Deputy Medina gave Mr. Sucharski verbal commands to enter his vehicle. He failed to do so, so they assisted him into the back seat and closed the door. Deputy Medina recalled Mr. Sucharski began yelling and screaming and started kicking the door to his patrol vehicle, to the point where the door was bowing out with each kick. Deputy Medina stated he engaged Mr. Sucharski and advised him to stop kicking his door. Deputy Medina advised he and Deputy Hansard established they were going to have to hobble Mr. Sucharski to prevent him from kicking. Deputy Medina stated,

*"That hobble didn't work. He continued kicking the door, yelling, screaming, and started banging his head or his body up against the partition in the cage at which point we decided we were gonna conduct or do the seat belt restraint to prevent him from damaging the vehicle and prevent him from hurting himself. So as we were trying to put the restraint on he kept tensing his body, he started laying back or moving from one side of the vehicle to the other preventing us from placing the restraint on him. Eventually, we got the restraint through his arms and got it connected so I remained in the vehicle trying to tighten the seat belt restraint. Deputy Hansard closed the door to come over to my side to assist me on that side. At that point in time is when the defendant he reared his head back and struck me in the cheek area on the left side of my face. Out of pure reaction I immediately*



*struck him in response to prevent any further attacks and then when I could, I got out of the vehicle and that's when we, I notified Deputy Hansard of what happened. We contacted the supervisor on the radio, at which time Sergeant Campanella responded and asked me to call him. So I called him on the phone, I told him what occurred he said he would be right out. He notified the watch commander, who in turn came out. Now, when I struck the defendant I did, afterwards I did notice a little bit of blood coming from his cheek, which led me to believe that I caused the laceration or abrasion to which he was bleeding so Deputy Hansard contacted fire rescue to come out and check him out and give him any medical attention as needed. And that's when the Sergeant and Lieutenant showed up and then everybody else showed up".*

Deputy Medina advised he and Deputy Hansard were the only two deputies on scene when the defendant head butted him in the face. Deputy Medina clarified after the defendant head butted him he reacted immediately by striking him. Deputy Medina advised he only struck the defendant one time, and he did so to prevent him from causing him further injury and to create distance between them. Deputy Medina felt if he had not struck the defendant he may have had the opportunity to head butt him again, causing further injury. Deputy Medina stated he could not tell if the defendant was intoxicated, but advised it seemed he was under the influence of some type of narcotic. Deputy Medina recalled wearing department issued latex gloves during the incident.

Deputy Medina advised Mr. Sucharski refused any medical service and was uncooperative with them. Deputy Medina also refused medical attention, but stated fellow deputies advised him he had redness and swelling to the left side of his face. Mr. Sucharski was additionally charged with battery on a law enforcement officer.

Deputy Medina was asked if he felt he violated the following Volusia County Merit Rules and Regulations as well as Sheriff's Office policies:

**26.2.132 Job Knowledge and Performance** **No**

**Volusia County Merit System Rules and Regulations 86-453 (14)** **No**

**Volusia County Merit System Rules and Regulations 86-453 (22)**

**No**

*(See Tab –E for Official Transcript)*

**CONCLUSION:**

On July 1, 2020, this investigation was presented to the Sheriff and his staff. After review, the Sheriff determined the violation of the below listed department and county policies to be:

**26.2.132 Job Knowledge and Performance**

**Not Sustained**

**Volusia County Merit System Rules and Regulations 86-453 (14)**

**Not Sustained**

**Volusia County Merit System Rules and Regulations 86-453 (22)**

**Not Sustained**

**EXHIBITS:**

- A. Report of Investigation
- B. Administration of Oath/Perjury Warning/Garrity Warning
- C. Official Correspondence/Supervisors Inquiry
- D. Official Transcript of Sergeant Michael Campanella
- E. Official Transcript of Deputy Trevor Brown
- F. Official Transcript of Deputy Joshua Hansard
- G. Official Transcript of Deputy Joel Medina
- H. Miscellaneous Documents
- I. Digital Media

**WITNESSES:**

Sergeant Michael Campanella  
Volusia County Sheriff's Office  
386-736-5961

Deputy Trevor Brown  
Volusia County Sheriff's Office  
386-736-5961

Deputy Joshua Hansard  
Volusia County Sheriff's Office  
386-736-5961

I, the undersigned, do hereby swear, under the penalty of perjury, that, to the best of my personal knowledge, information, and belief, I have not knowingly or willfully deprived, or allowed another to deprive, the suspect of the investigation of any rights contained in ss. 112.532 and 112.533, Florida Statutes.

DETECTIVE: Heather Welch #6871 DATE: 7/01/2020  
**Detective Heather Welch**  
**Internal Affairs Detective**

APPROVED BY: Joseph Gallagher #2057 DATE: 7-01-2020  
**Chief Deputy Joseph Gallagher**  
**SHERIFF MICHAEL J. CHITWOOD**  
**VOLUSIA COUNTY FLORIDA**